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LETTER

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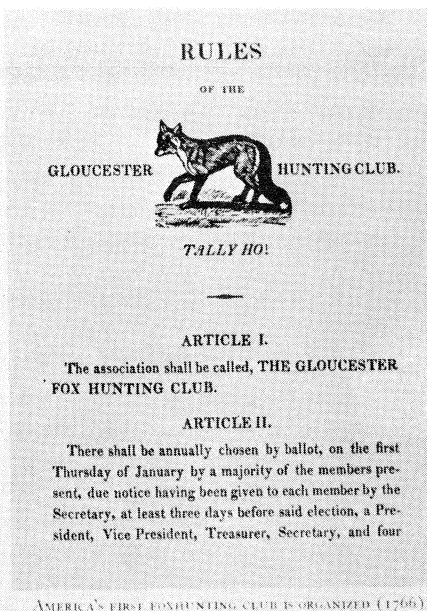
December 1984

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No. 19



JONAS CATTELL



AMERICA'S FIRST FOXHUNTING CLUB IS ORGANIZED (1766)

Illustration and title page from the William Milnor, Jr. "Memoirs of the Gloucester Fox Hunting Club", Philadelphia, 1830, the first history of such an organization published in this country.

Articles and Books on American Foxhunting

Alexander Mackay-Smith

Part I

Considering the relatively small number of people who take part in the sport, the literature of foxhunting is really enormous. The difficulty for Americans is that nearly all the books still in print are about foxhunting in the British Isles which in many ways is quite different from hunting in North America. On this side of the Atlantic we do not kill foxes, but preserve them so that we can enjoy the excitement of the chase. Scent is

poorer and foxes scarcer and wilder. Our hounds are keen even though they do not kill. We have fewer followers who ride to hounds and we jump panels with perfect take offs and landings, rather than more chancey hedges and banks.

For a budding foxhunter there is a great deal to be learned from books which are, in fact, just as essential a part of their equipment as their clothes, tack and horses. The following study outlines the major publications on American foxhunting.

The 18th Century

The classics of American foxhunting literature begin with the diaries kept by Lt. Col. George Washington from 1767 until the start of the Revolution, recording the sport shown by the Mt. Vernon pack. Although written as a personal record and not for publication, the style is direct and the details so minute it makes fascinating reading. In Archdeacon Burnaby's *Travels Through the Middle Settlements*, published 1798, Burnaby included a graphic

description of Washington's first employer, Thomas, sixth Lord of Fairfax and his foxhunting activities at Greenway Court, Clarke County, Virginia. In 1829 John Stuart Skinner published in his *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, *Washington A Sportsman*, an article by George Washington Parke Custis, grandson of Martha Custis Washington.

A History of the *Gloucester Fox Hunting Club 1766-1818*, America's first hunt club, by William Milnor was the first published history (1830) of such an organization. This was founded by a group of Philadelphia gentlemen whose kennels were located in Gloucester County, New Jersey, across the Delaware river from the City of Brotherly Love.

In June 1940 in the Maryland Historical Magazine, appeared an article *The Baltimore Hunt Club of 1793* by Margery Whyte. The following year J. Brooks Parker wrote an article, *Horses and Hunting in Colonial Days*, published by the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Periodicals

During the 19th century most of the printed accounts of American foxhunting are found in the sporting magazines.

The first regular sports column to appear in any American periodical was published in the January 21, 1825 issue of our first American agricultural magazine, *The American Farmer*, founded and edited by John Stuart Skinner and published in Baltimore. This column was headed "Sporting Olio." It was illustrated by a cut of a mounted foxhunter with two hounds. The article was titled "Fox Hunting." The author of the text offered to present "one dozen of very superior hounds to any gentleman or company of gentlemen within striking distance of Baltimore." Skinner continued to publish many foxhunting items in *The American Farmer* until he sold it in 1829 and founded *The American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, which was crammed with items on foxhunting in the United States.

In the December 19, 1835 issue of that excessively rare weekly newspaper "The Gentleman's Vade Mecum; or The Sporting and Dramatic Companion" (also published in Philadelphia), appears a spirited account of a three days' hunt in New-

castle County, Delaware. The *American Turf Register* for March 1841 reprinted an article, first published in London in the June 1836 issue of the *New Sporting Magazine* under the pen-name "Chasseur," entitled "Fox Hunting in Canada," which includes an account of the difficulties experienced in following hounds across the small farms of the French "habitants" near Montreal.

During the War Between the States, in spite of the nearby-ravages of Sherman's invading army, Joseph Addison Turner, with the aid of a "printer's devil" later to become famous as the author of "Uncle Remus," published at his plantation in Putnam County, Georgia, a weekly magazine called *The Countryman* of which Emory University has a unique file. His star contributor was George Lawrence Forsyth Birdsong of Upson County, not only the mid-century's leading breeder of the Birdsong-July strain, but also a gifted writer whose articles on foxes, hounds and foxhunting are outstanding in this field.

Actually the first weekly devoted to Field Sports was *The Spirit of the Times or Life in New York* founded January 1st, 1831 by William T. Porter whose equestrian interests, however, were centered on racing rather than foxhunting. After the War, Porter being dead and the paper sold to John Wilkes, the staff of the "Old Spirit" founded *Turf, Field and Farm*, (New York) retaining as its Field Sports editor (March, 1866) Col. Frederic Gustavus Skinner, son of the founder of the *American Turf Register*. In his youth a guest for five years at Lafayette's Chateau de la Grange, Skinner received a European education not only in the classics, but also in every variety of field sports, including fox, stag and boar hunting. First following the Washington and Baltimore Hunts, he later, as a cotton planter, hunted in Mississippi and then followed the private packs of Rappahannock County, Virginia, where he lived at "Montpelier," his father-in-law's plantation. Skinner wrote extensively for *Turf, Field and Farm*, and for the *Cincinnati* (daily) *Times* of which he later became Field and Agricultural Editor. From December 10, 1886 to June 7, 1889 he published serially in *Turf, Field, and Farm* his autobiography which is unsurpassed in American sporting literature. Another notable contribution to this

periodical (Dec. 26, 1884) was *Great Run and the Last of Old Whitey* by "Nicholas Spicer" (Albin S. Payne), describing a famous foxhunt in Fauquier and Rappahannock Counties, Virginia, during the mid-1840s.

The next field sports periodical (1881) was the *American Field*, published in Chicago, which included articles by Col. Skinner and Col. James Gordon ("Pious Jeems") on foxhunting in Mississippi (March and December, 1881); by A. Fielder on *Wild Bill, the Arkansas Foxhunting Mule* (Sept. 1882); by James Norris, three articles on foxhunting in the 1830s in the Alexandria, Virginia area (1888-1889); by Joel Chandler Harris, of *Uncle Remus* fame on *The First Red Fox in Georgia*, (Feb. 1892); and by Felix Sullivan on *Foxhunting on the Eastern Shore* (Dec. 1908).

The growing interest in foxhunting, which by the 1890s had reached national proportions, prompted *Scribner's Magazine* to publish in 1893 an article by Joel Chandler Harris relating three different hunts, including his magnificent account of Birdsong's Hodo '54. Two years later (Aug. 1895), *Scribner's* included a graphic description of the first National Foxhound Field Trials by John Fox, Jr. In 1892 there was published in Cincinnati, Ohio, the first issue of *The Sportsmen's Review*, devoted primarily to shooting and bird dogs, which also included a weekly column on foxhunting. Soon becoming the accepted medium for hound men, *The Review* published a description of Wash Maupin's hunt in 1856 of the famous black fox with Tennessee Lead and his offspring; an account by Haiden Trigg's nephew of a hunt with the former's Full Cry pack; Judge C. Floyd Huff's story of *The Mover's Hounds*; and the illustrated series of 15 articles on the Birdsong-July hound by George J. Garrett (1905-1906), later published in book form (Midland, Georgia, 1938) under the title *Fifty Years with Fox and Hounds*.

Field trial foxhunters started their own monthly magazine, *The Red Ranger*, in 1911, followed by *The Chase* in 1920 and *The Hunter's Horn* in 1921, all of which continue to flourish. These magazines have printed and reprinted many foxhunting classics, including *Those Walker Hounds of Mine* by John Trotwood Moore (*The Chase*, Jan. 1929); H.

E. C. Bryant's *The Bywaters Hounds and the Meeting House Fox* (The Chase, Sept. 1930); *The Danbury Fox* by Judge Henry P. Lane (The Chase, 1933) and Samuel Derieux *The Trial in Old Tom Belcher's Store* (The Red Ranger, Sept. 1920, republished from *The American Magazine*).

The Foxhound Quarterly, published 1910-1914 in London, England contained important articles on American hounds and hunting by A. Henry Higginson, Harry Worcester Smith, Redmond C. Stewart, C. J. Prouty, Haiden S. Trigg, C. Floyd Huff, James P. Worrall and Dr. A. C. Heffenger.

In the Dec. 1914 issue, James C. Cooley, field sports editor of the monthly *Town and Country*, wrote a great story of *The Snow Day Hunt* of A. Henry Higginson's Middlesex pack at Millbrook, New York, which magazine was designated as the "official mouthpiece" of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America at its annual meeting on Feb. 23, 1917. This distinction was transferred on January 27, 1928 by the Association to the monthly, *The Sportsmen*, which with W. Newbold Ely, M.F.H., as foxhunting editor, published many fine articles on the sport including (Jan. 1932) *The Art and Mystery of Naming Hounds* by R. P. Harriss. A contemporary magazine (founded June 1927 as *Polo*) was the monthly *Horse and Horseman*, among whose articles was Clifton Lisle's *The Gloucester Fox Hunting Club, 1766-1818* (Feb. 1932). Other notable articles of this era include two from *The (British) Field*, *Brooksby's Bye-Day with the Queen's County Hunt* (Oct. 22, 1892) and Lord Dorchester's *A Day with the Middleburg Pack* (Feb. 1935); and accounts by father and son, Col. Marcellus L. Davis and Henry P. Davis, of two great hunts in Arkansas *The Stranger* (Congressional Record, Nov. 1, 1921) and *Tate's Band Finds a Leader* (The National Sportsman, Dec. 1931).

On January 31, 1941, *The Chronicle* (now *The Chronicle of the Horse*), a weekly published in Middleburg, became the official publication of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America, whose official Hunt Roster it had printed since 1939. The Chronicle has since published many noteworthy contributions to American foxhunting literature by authors including P. T. Cheff, M.F.H., Samuel J. Henry, Alexander Mackay-Smith,

M.F.H., Chancellor Thomas H. Malone, Gilbert Mather, M.F.H., Mrs. Nelson Slater, M.F.H., Harry Worcester Smith, M.F.H., Francis McIlhenny Stifler, and DeCourcy Wright.

Many of the articles mentioned above were reprinted in *American Foxhunting: An Anthology* by Alexander Mackay-Smith, published in 1970 by the American Foxhound Club.

Part II

Books About Hounds and Hunting in North America

Books about foxhunting in North America published during the 19th century were few and far between. In 1845 *The Dog and the Sportsman* by John Stuart Skinner was published in Philadelphia by Lea and Blanchard. In 1874 Porter and Coates of Philadelphia published *The Fox Chase* by James Bowen Everhart, an epic poem which is the counterpart for American foxhunting of William Somerville's "The Chase" for English foxhunting.

Mr. Everhart was master of the West Chester Hunt, which was founded in 1871. West Chester hunted the country near this town in Chester County, Pennsylvania, until forced to disband just a few years ago because of subdivisions. The action in Everhart's poem takes place near the forks of the Brandywine river. Everhart wrote, "And surely, never yet was heard;/From tongue of man, or throat of bird;/From reed or tube or string or key;/From all the craft of minstrelsy;/More stirring, joy-inspired sounds than our rude orchestra of hounds."

During the last decades of the century Major Austin Wadsworth, founder (1876) and Master of the Genesee Valley hunt in western New York state, printed and distributed to members of this field a text on how to behave which became known as *The Bible* and which has been widely quoted ever since.

During the 20th century however, books on American foxhunting were published in much greater numbers. These included several on the various strains of American hounds. About 1895 Haiden Trigg published in Glasgow, Kentucky, *The American Foxhound* on the Trigg strain. Several 19th century articles on field trial hounds were collected under the

same title and published by Thurston J. Rostad at Spring Valley, Wisconsin. General Roger D. Williams, organizer of the first (1894) national field trial, wrote *Horse and Hound*, published 1905 in Lexington, Kentucky, and *The Foxhound* published 1914 and 1922 in New York. In 1928 the Derrydale Press published Joseph B. Thomas' great book, *Hounds and Hunting Through the Ages* dealing largely with the pack hounds of the organized hunts. In 1938 George J. Garrett published in book form, at Midland, Georgia, his series of articles on the July hounds; *Dogs and Hounds*, a collection of articles on field trial hounds from the magazine *The Red Ranger*, was published (1944) at Rushville, Missouri by its editor, L. F. Gingory. A chapter by Gingory on American hounds is included in Eugene Connett's *American Sporting Dogs* (1948). In 1948 Woods Walker published *Walker Hounds* at Cynthiana, Kentucky, and in 1961 Bob Lee Maddux published *History of the Walker Hound* at Cookeville, Tennessee.

The American Foxhound Club published in 1968 at Millwood, Virginia, *The American Foxhound 1747-1967* by Alexander Mackay-Smith, the most extensive of the several books on this fascinating subject.

During the present century there have been printed a considerable number of histories of the various organized hunts, the first being the *History of the Rose Tree Fox Hunting Club* (founded 1859) by George E. Darlington, published in Philadelphia in 1901. In 1908 A. Henry Higginson and Julien I. Chamberlain compiled *The Hunts of the United States and Canada* containing details of the then organized hunts of these countries. This was brought up to date in 1928 under the title *Hunting in the United States and Canada*. A companion volume, *The Organized Hunts of America* by Col. John E. Rossell, was published in Baltimore in 1955. *Foxhunting in America* by Allen Potts was published in Washington, DC in 1912, in an edition of 100 copies. *The Book of Foxhunting* by J.N.P. Watson was published in London in 1977. Chapters on the sport in the United States were written by Alexander Mackay-Smith. Two important books on hunting history were *A Sporting Family of the Old South* (John Stuart and Frederic



"Hodo forces the fox to double." Illustration by A. B. Frost for Joel Chandler Harris' article on Birdsong's Hodo in *Scribners' Magazine*, 1893.

G. Skinner) by Harry Worcester Smith, Albany, NY, 1926 and J. B. Van Urk's *The Story of American Foxhunting*, published 1940 and 1941 by the Derrydale Press, Vol. I 1650-1816, Vol. II 1865-1906.

For Canada we have two books by Frank Proctor published 1929 and 1955 in Toronto, *Foxhunting in Canada* and *Under Six Sovereigns*. There is also a scholarly work *The History of the Montreal Hunt* (founded 1827) by J. S. Cooper, published 1953 in Montreal.

Of major importance are the publications of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America, founded 1907, beginning with Volume I of the Foxhound Kennel Stud Books (1909). It has also published a series of Year Books, the first in 1923. Several contain maps of hunting countries and annual lists of recognized and registered hunts. Organized *Foxhunting in America* by Gilbert Mather was

published in 1949, and in 1976 the *Foxhound Kennel Note Book* with subsequent additions. In 1980 the Association published its history *Masters of Foxhounds* by Alexander Mackay-Smith.

Of equal importance are the publications of the American Foxhound Club (founded 1912) edited by William W. Brainard. These include *The Training and Handling of Hounds in the Field* (1971); *Hunting the Fox* (1971); *Breeding a Pack of Foxhounds* (1974); *Organizing a Foxhunting Country* (1976) and *The Huntsman in the Field* by Isaac Bell (1979). The AFC has also published three books by Alexander Mackay-Smith: *The American Foxhound 1747-1967* (1968); *American Foxhunting, an Anthology* (1970) and *The Songs of Foxhunting* (1974).

Since 1900 there have been published a number of sporting biographies, autobiographies and remmescences of prominent foxhunters. The earliest of

these deals with the hunting career (1887-1901) of Charles E. Mather, entitled *Master of Radnor* (1947). The following lists the men concerned together with the dates when the books by or about them were published: Frank Sherman Peer 1902, 1910; J. Stanley Reeve 1921-1958 (seven volumes); Frank Gray Griswold 1926; Everett Crawford ("Anole Hunter") 1929; Edith O. Somerville 1930; A. Henry Higginson 1931, 1951; Mrs. Thomas Hitchcock 1935; Harry T. Peters 1935; Betty Babcock 1935-1937; Foxhall Keene 1936; Redmond Stewart 1936; Samuel J. Henry 1938; O'Malley Knott 1944; Mason Houghland 1949; Lida Fleitmann Bloodgood 1953.

Other titles include *Foxhunting Formalities* by J. Stanley Reeve 1929; *Thoughts Upon Hunting Kit* by Eugene S. Reynal 1934; *Foxhunting, Theory and Practice* by A. Henry Higginson 1948; *British and American Sporting Authors* by A. Henry Higginson 1951; *Thoughts on American Foxhunting* by Denison B. Hull 1958; *Riding to Hounds in America* by William P. Wadsworth 1959; and *The Songs of Foxhunting* by Alexander Mackay-Smith 1974.

Part III Twentieth Century American Foxhunting Fiction

The setting of an important piece of American foxhunting fiction was the Genesee Valley in western New York state, hunted by hounds of Major Austin Wadsworth, the first president of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America. From roughly 1890 to 1914, the Genesee Valley packed was the most fashionable organized hunt in North America. David Gray, who later served as U.S. Minister to Ireland, took up residence in the Genesee Valley shortly after graduating from Harvard in 1892. He wrote three sets of foxhunting stories: *Gallops*, *Gallops II* and *Mr. Carteret*, which were published respectively in 1898, 1903 and 1910. These are delightful stories, the characters of which were modeled after several of the leading followers of Mr. Wadsworth's hounds.

Joel Chandler Harris, the long time editor of *The Atlanta Constitution* in Georgia, achieved international fame as the author of *Uncle Remus*. In 1917, he

published in New York a book titled *On the Plantation, the Story of a Georgia Boy's Adventures During the War*. The book contained a chapter, "A Georgia Foxhunt," based on an article published in *The Atlanta Constitution* on December 16, 1877. It makes charming reading. Another Harris book, *Tales of the Home Folks in Peace and War* (1899) includes *How Whalebone Caused a Wedding* about foxhunting in Putnam County, Georgia.

Frank Gray Griswold (1854-1937) was a founder in 1877 of the Queens County Hounds on Long Island, which later became the Meadow Brook Hunt. Griswold served as the first master of Queens County for nearly 20 years. From 1913 to 1931, he published seven volumes of his reminiscences, titled *Sport on Land and Water*. He also published two novels, *Stolen Kisses* and the *Memoirs of Diana Grisdale MFH*. His books were privately printed and make very pleasant reading.

Two stories written in 1921 and 1931 by Col. Marcellus L. Davis and by his son, Henry P. Davis, "The Stranger" and "Tate's Band," were published in book form in 1938. The foreword is by the famous writer on shooting subjects, Nash Buckingham, and the delightful illustrations are by Fred. F. McCaleb. "The Stranger" deals with night hunting as practiced in North America. It is guaranteed to quicken the pulses of all true foxhunters.

Eugene V. Connett III, after graduating from Princeton University with a bachelor's degree in literature, retired from business in 1925 and founded the Derrydale Press two years later. This venture was devoted to the publication of sporting books in limited editions, beautifully printed. Today, they are avidly sought by book collectors with or without sporting tastes. Although Mr. Connett personally was interested in fishing and shooting, he published many outstanding books on horses and horse sports including: *Hounds and Hunting Through the Ages* by Joseph B. Thomas, MFH of the Piedmont Fox Hounds and other hunts, which appeared in 1928; in 1929, Derrydale published the Hitchcock edition of David Gray's three books illustrated by Paul Brown.

Gordon Grand was a lifelong foxhunter — for over 50 years he hunted

with the Essex Fox Hounds in New Jersey, the Fairfield and the Westchester Hounds in Connecticut and with the Millbrook Hunt in New York. When convalescing following a long illness, Grand wrote for his own amusement a few foxhunting stories which fortunately were shown to Eugene Connett. Published under the title *The Silver Horn* in 1932, these were such a success that Grand yielded to the insistence of Connett and continued to write about foxhunting in the Millbrook country. Later volumes include: "Col. Weatherford" (1933); "Old Man" (1934); "Col. Weatherford's Young Entry" (1935) and the "Southborough Fox" (1939). A collection of these stories under the title *The Millbeck Hounds* was published in 1947.

Mr. Grand also wrote three short stories which he presented to his friends and family at Christmas time. These were "A Horse for Christmas Morning" (1939), "Perfect Faith" (1943) and "Mr. Henry P. Throckmorton" (1948). These stories, illustrated by Wallace Nall, were published in a collected edition in 1970. Mr. Grand's stories are based on an intimate knowledge of foxhunting with an added touch of sentiment. Deservedly, they are the most popular of all American foxhunting fiction.

In 1937, Derrydale published in two volumes a novel titled *Bolivar* by Marguerite Bayliss, an improbably romantic story about foxhunting in Virginia which nevertheless makes entertaining reading. Miss Bayliss is also known as the author of *The Matriarchy of the American Turf*, a study of the tail female lines of the American Thoroughbred.

A. Henry Higginson, master of the Middlesex in Massachusetts and of the Cattistock in England, also served as president of the Masters of Foxhounds Association from 1915-1931, and he edited the first four volumes of its *Foxhound Kennel Stud Book*. He is the most prolific writer of the MFH's in the 20th century. In addition to more than a dozen books on other aspects of foxhunting, he wrote four volumes of stories: *The Fox that Walked on the Water* (1939); *The Tale of Two Brushes* (1943); *The Perfect Follower* (1944) and *The Hill Vixen* (1945). They are charmingly written.

The work of American foxhunting fiction best known to the general public is

The Voice of Bugle Ann, written by MacKinlay Kantor and published in 1935. It is certainly one of the best-told tales dealing with the sport. The well-known novelist James Boyd, author of *Drums*, was a founding member and Jt.-MFH of the Moore County Hounds, Southern Pines, North Carolina. He wrote a foxhunting novel, *Away, Away!* published in 1945.

Certainly the greatest novel of foxhunting fiction by night is *Hunter's Horn* by Harriette Arnow, a story of foxhunting in the hills of eastern Kentucky, published in 1949.

Among the many novels and stories written for the younger generation, the best known is *Cinnabar, the One O'Clock Fox* by Marguerite Henry, which was illustrated by that good foxhunter, the late Wesley Dennis, and first published in 1956.

Charles C. D. Roberts is one of Canada's most distinguished men of letters. His book *Red Fox* (1972) entirely apart from its subject matter is considered a classic of Canadian literature.

(Parts of this article reprinted with permission from *The Chronicle of the Horse*.)

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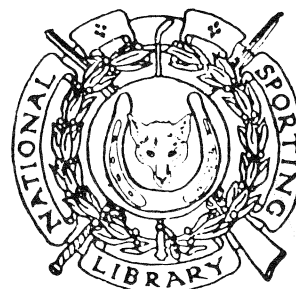
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